

President's Report 2009-10

The Executive is committed to sustaining a strong National Capital Branch within the CIC's mandate to be a non-partisan, nationwide foreign policy council to strengthen Canada's foreign policy through research and dialogue on international affairs. Working within these parameters, after a meeting with CIC Chair Jim Balsillie, my objectives this year have been twofold: to raise the CIC profile in Ottawa and to rejuvenate our membership by reaching out to young professionals and graduate students. We're also trying to figure out how to do more with Parliament Hill. In terms of raising our profile, almost every one of our dinner events is now taped by CPAC for future broadcast. This multiplies the number of eyeballs and increases our reach across the country. We've reached, with success, to young professionals and graduate students at Carleton and the University of Ottawa. We have aimed at finding events and speakers that are relevant and of interest to our membership. For example, we did a career-orientation 'speed date' evening at Carleton and our youth caucus is now looking at other events designed to attract younger members. We are actively encouraging young professionals within the Federal Government to join the CIC.

Our anchor events continue to be our monthly dinners at the Sheraton. We also have a number of autonomous units: our Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) headed by Gerry Wright and Craig Hunter meet regularly under Chatham House rules and in January, under the chairmanship of David Lee, hosted a very successful two-day public conference 'The World in 2015: The Implications for Canada' with speakers from around the world that drew three hundred participants. The FPI continues to hold seminars aimed at bringing together policymakers and stakeholders from inside and outside government to discuss topical international issues. A seminar is planned on Europe for the autumn, which will look at the EU's ability to act as a single unit versus the individual members acting on their own and future events could include how Canadian policy problems are manifested in the arctic, and the challenges posed by international crime. Three other study groups look independently at the Middle East (Peter Larson), Latin America (Ken Johnson) and Africa (Tony Halliday, Barb Darling, Rizwan Haider). The Africa study group hosted a day-long conference this year with speakers coming from across North America.

This past year our dinner speakers included New York Times Washington correspondent David Sanger speaking on the Obama foreign policy inheritance (the subject of his best-selling book), broadcaster and foreign correspondent Don Newman reflecting on foreign policy coverage throughout his career, author and journalist Andrew Cohen speaking about L.B. 'Mike' Pearson's legacy (the subject of his Penguin short biography), a dialogue on the eve of the Copenhagen Climate Change conference with British High Commissioner Anthony Cary, National Roundtable on Energy and the Environment president David McLaughlin and Carleton University professor Glen Toner, US

Ambassador David Jacobson on Canada-US relations, Lieutenant General Andy Leslie on Afghanistan and the Canadian Forces, Canadian Council of Chief Executives president and former deputy prime minister John Manley observations on our foreign policy and the opportunities in trade and investment and a roundtable on the G8/20 with former sherpas Si Taylor, Peter Harder and Jim Judd.

Critical to successful operation is partnership with like-minded institutions. As members will know from their regular email traffic, we act as an aggregator to inform you of events hosted by like-minded organizations that we believe would be of interest to you.

Fen Hampson and the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs have given us access to an office at Carleton University and we regularly partner with them and Roland Paris at the University of Ottawa's Centre for International Policy Studies. The David Sanger event was done in partnership with NPSIA and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre and we recently launched a study 'Reinventing CIDA' at CIPS in collaboration with the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute. The CIDA paper was written by Gordon Smith and Barry Carin, former foreign service officers now directing the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria. Their presentation in the Desmarais Building drew a standing room only audience of 200. We later met with an interdepartmental group of senior executives hosted at CIDA. Our Afghanistan panel with parliamentarians was done in cooperation with Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation. We also partner with FOCAL (my gratitude to their director, Carlo Dade, for providing us with offices for our executive and board meetings), the IDRC (whose generous grant has helped us host the January conference and other events) as well as the Retired Heads of Mission Association and the Conference of Defence Associations Institute.

Exposing policy ideas through the media and then debating them in both public and private forum we are convinced that we have a positive influence on policy development and just as importantly, contribute to public education. In my travels across the country I see a desire by Canadians to learn more about the wider world – getting context and facts from those of us who have served abroad – and then making up their own mind.

My appreciation to the Executive: vice presidents, Serge April and Craig Macdonald; our program director, Bruce Jutzi; our Treasurer, Joseph Odhiambo our secretary Allison McCaskill, our communications director, Bernie Etzinger, and Craig Hunter who headed up the nominations committee, as well as to our board. My ongoing appreciation to the former presidents: Craig Hunter (who serves on the executive), Louise Terrillion Mackay, Barbara Darling and Gerry Wright for their ongoing thoughtful advice. Sandy McCoy continues to provide excellent administrative support and we welcomed Cristina Warren as our programs officer in January around the Foreign Policy Conference.